treading

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/4723145.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Gravity Falls
Relationship:	Stanford Pines/Stanley Pines
Characters:	The Author | Original Stanford Pines, Grunkle Stan | Stanley "Stanford" Pines
Additional Tags:	Sibling Incest, Additional Warnings In Author's Note, Ratings may vary, Kissing
Language:	English
Collections:	Mixed
Stats:	Published: 2015-09-04 Completed: 2016-01-18 Words: 9,743 Chapters: 12/12

treading

by calciseptine

Summary

"The things I do for you, Sixer," he murmurs.

A collection of (mostly) unrelated Stancest drabbles written for a list of kiss prompts. Marked as complete but will be updated sporadically.

Notes

prompt: good morning kiss

warnings: none

fortificare

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *good morning kiss*.

Stan inhales sharply as the scream of his alarm startles him to wakefulness at three forty-five in the morning. It shrills once—twice—three times before Stan is cognizant enough to sit up, reach over, and jab the off button.

Goddamn, Stan thinks groggily, digging the heel of his hand into his blurry eyes. The numbers on the digital clock mock him. *It's too fuckin' early.*

Next to him, Ford shifts. He is not as sensitive to the alarm as Stan is—never has been and never will be—and once settled, he slumbers on restfully. He is lying on his side, his face turned away from Stan; briefly, Stan contemplates falling back into the warmth of the sheets and wrapping his arm around Ford's lean waist. It would be infinitely more pleasurable to pull Ford's body into the cradle of his own than it would be to get up, get dressed, and drive to his job at the fish hatchery.

I could call in sick, Stan debates internally as he sways unconsciously towards Ford's sleeping body. One of his hands curls into the divot where Ford's rib cage ends and becomes flesh. *I have a few left. I could sleep in—cook some breakfast.*

The idea is tempting, but—

But—

They have a mortgage, now. A car payment. An electric bill, a phone bill, a heating bill. They have to pay for groceries. Ford's grant money covers some of the expenses but it does not cover enough for Stan not to have a job, and if the hatchery fires him, Gravity Falls does not have a lot of options beyond flipping burgers.

Stan sighs as the burden of responsibility outweighs his selfish desires. He has already used over half of his allotted time and the year isn't even half over.

So instead of giving into temptation, Stan leans down and presses his mouth against the freckles on Ford's shoulder. His eyes close as he lingers, and breathes in; Ford smells like the heavy woods outside their cabin, like the unfinished lab several stories below, like their shared bed. The combination is deeply comforting.

"The things I do for you, Sixer," Stan murmurs, his dry, chapped lips catching on the smoothness of Ford's skin. It is this small, quiet affection that gives Stan the strength to pull away—to tuck the blankets back around Ford's body—and to get up, and start another day.

like a glass of warm milk

Chapter Notes

> I wrote another drabble for this prompt list. The prompt was *a kiss on the forehead* and, I'm not gonna lie, all of these are probably going to be feel good domestic nonsense stories set in vague feel good domestic alternate universes. I REGRET NOTHING.

Ford's magazine—a thin science journal filled with peer-reviewed essays—flops to carpet halfway through an *I Love Lucy* re-run.

"Asleep already?" Stan murmurs as his attention shifts from the television to his brother. Ford is tucked into the corner of their new couch, his neck bent at an awkward angle and his jaw slack. He has not been asleep for long, as his breathing is still light enough to be inaudible. "Geez, you're such an old man."

If Ford were awake, he would scowl at Stan's remark. His thick eyebrows would furrow over his dark eyes, and he would succinctly remind Stan that twenty-seven is a mere third of his estimated lifespan. Stan would smirk at Ford's predictability—Ford has always responded to taunts by reciting facts—and, depending on how irritating Ford found Stan's remark, Ford would then point out, "You and I are separated in age by a matter of minutes. If I am an old man, then you are an old man, too."

But since Ford is not awake, he is oblivious to Stan's comment. He also cannot bear witness to the way Stan's gaze lingers long enough to become infinitely tender.

"You gotta stop working so hard, poindexter," Stan says softly as he brushes Ford's unruly fringe back and presses a quick, dry kiss to his forehead, the way their ma had when they were rowdy, scabrous children. "You're gonna burn yourself out."

Ford stirs slightly beneath the touch. His eyes are half-lidded and unfocused as Stan pulls back. When he lifts his head, Stan sees that his cheek is lined from where it had rested on the textured brown and burnt orange cushion.

"Lee?" he mumbles, slurring Stan's name into the second syllable as he only does when he's particularly vulnerable. "Wha'time s'it?"

"Late," Stan replies as Ford covers a wide, jaw-cracking yawn. "Wanna hit the hay?"

Ford nods. His tiredness is so palpable that Stan, ever sympathetic to Ford's moods, gets off the couch, slides one arm under Ford's knees and the other around Ford's back, and hoists him off the couch. The spark of mischievousness Stan feels when Ford gasps his name—

when Ford immediately wraps his arms around Stan's neck—is no more a pleasant afterthought.

"Well then," Stan laughs as he carries his cursing brother out into the hallway and up the stairs to their bedroom. "Let's get you tucked in."

the fulcrum

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *"I've missed you" kiss*. This one is a little shorter than normal, but I couldn't get it out of my head.

When the portal opens and Ford sees his brother, the first thing he does is punch him as hard as he can. Stan staggers underneath the unexpected blow.

"God*damn*!" Stan exclaims, his hand going to his jaw. "The hell, Sixer—"

The second thing Ford does is kiss Stan. He tangles one dirty hand in the short length of Stan's hair, cradles the uninjured side of Stan's face in the broad of his wide palm, and crushes his lips to Stan's lips. Stan immediately wraps his arms around Ford's waist and pulls their bodies flush: chest to chest, hip to hip, and thigh to thigh. They are both desperate to be as close to one another as they physically can be, and when Stan opens his mouth to invite Ford inside, Ford does so as easily as if they had spent a lifetime together rather than a lifetime apart.

This time, they stagger together.

a little gnome problem

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *drunken/sloppy kiss*. This fic went in a completely different direction than I originally planned, as per freaking usual.

This fic contains several f-bombs, possessive behavior, and slander against gnomes.

It has been a year and a half since they left California for Oregon and, in that time, the six-pack of cheap, off-brand pale ale on the bottom shelf of the fridge has become a permanent fixture in Ford's life.

This development is unsurprising. There is not much to divert in the small, sleepy town of Gravity Falls, and Stan has made an easy habit of cracking a cold one in the evening. He'll nurse one beer on ordinary days, slumped into the sagging couch on the back porch as he watches the sun set below the line of moss-covered conifers; on rougher days, when work was particularly stressful or when the anomaly-du-jour was more dangerous than anticipated, he'll chug two or three while he leans against the fridge door.

Today has been a "let's skip the beer and go straight for the Canadian whisky" kind of day.

"Gnomes," Stan gripes as he refills their shot glasses. He and Ford sit across from one another at their tiny kitchen table, their sore legs tangled like vines underneath. "Why did it hafta be gnomes?"

There is an angry bite on Stan's muscular forearm. One particularly zealous creature had sunk their teeth in as Stan fought to reach Ford, and—while the burst capillaries will eventually deepen to a bruise—it is sheer dumb luck that no blood had been drawn. Ford glares at the wound as he sips at his thimble of Crown Royal. He knows, intellectually, that neither the force nor the duration of his skulking will change the fact that Stan has been harmed because of him, but the truth of this logic does not stop Ford in the slightest.

"—wanted you t'be their queen!" Stan continues to rant, his cheeks rosy from anger and alcohol. "What kinda—those little fucks better not come near the cabin again, or I'll punt their small asses like goddamn footballs to the fuckin' moon—"

Stan pauses his tirade long enough to slam his fifth shot of whiskey. When he tilts his head back, Ford's gaze fixes upon the long, handsome line of his brother's stubble darkened throat. The muscles of his esophagus constrict and his heavy, laryngeal prominence rises as the burn goes down. Like Stan, this precious moment is the only moment in which Ford does not obsess over that which he cannot change.

"D'ya think those little ankle biters know yer a man?" Stan continues. His lips are shiny from booze and spit. "Christ—coulda just—whipped it out, or somethin'—"

"It is possible that the gnomes don't have the same concept of gender that we do," Ford replies distractedly. His stare slides from Stan's throat back to Stan's forearm. He can see the indent of each individual tooth; perhaps, when the sight does not make him want to go back into the woods and strangle the hapless creature that put it there, he will draw it in his journal and compare the dental structure to a human's. "Queen could be a title, rather than a designation."

Stan scoffs, deep and ugly, before he pours himself a sixth shot and tops Ford off with a still steady hand. He then raises the tiny glass in salute and slurs, "Fuckin' gnomes."

"Fucking gnomes," Ford commiserates, clinks his drink against Stan's, touches it to the peeling veneer of the tabletop, and slings it back. It does not go down easily—he never learned how to open his throat properly, how to swallow the sting—and he coughs afterwards.

They continue to drink steadily and silently. With one, white-knuckled hand on the whiskey bottle and the other pinching his shot glass, Stan scowls at the woods beyond the wide kitchen window. His boiling anger has simmered down to a contemplative roil, but his brown eyes are still flinty and the line of his mouth is still hard; it makes Ford wonder what his brother is thinking behind his stony mask. Is he annoyed that Ford had gone into an unknown part of the forest without him, even though he's asked Ford multiple times to wait until he was done with work? Is he irritated that Ford let his curiosity override his common sense? Is he peeved that Ford had been taken hostage by supernatural creatures? Is he exasperated by the fact that he had to save his stupid brother because he made another stupid mistake? Is he irked that he was hurt during the rescue?

"*Fuck,*" Ford curses emphatically, as though he could shake the heavy weight of the guilt. "Fuck, Stan, I'm—"

The apology sticks in Ford's throat. He wants to tell Stan how sorry he is for what happened, but fears that if he does, he will apologize for more than the gnome incident. After all, none of the bad things that Stan has endured would have happened if he had not followed Ford to Gravity Falls—to California for grad school—to West Coast Tech—

Stan sets down his shot glass and reaches across the table to pinch the soft skin of Ford's inner elbow. The sharp and unexpected pain makes Ford flinch, makes him look away from the bite mark on Stan's forearm to the infinite understanding hidden in the black depths of Stan's eyes.

"Stop it," Stan commands as he curls his warm hands around Ford's exposed wrists. His consonants are soft with intoxication. "Whatever yer thinkin', just—just *stop*."

It is a testament to how well Stan understands Ford that Stan then reinforces his stern demand by lifting one of Ford's hands to his mouth and placing a kiss in the center of Ford's wide palm. Such a tender touch should contradict Stan's authority, but all Ford can do is inhale sharply at the sight of his brother's bowed head, and tremble.

"Yer mine," Stan snarls. His lips form his words directly upon Ford's flesh so those words can sink into the unshakeable hollows of Ford's bones. "Yer *mine*, and no one—no one—*no one* can have you, alright? Just—don't let anyone—promise me, Sixer, promise me—no one else—"

Ford takes in the loose strands of Stan's too long hair and the deep furrow of Stan's thick brow. He knows that it would be selfish to give into Stan since the only surety he can promise his brother is that that he will inevitably hurt him: intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, physically or emotionally. Yet giving into Stan is a unfortunate habit that Ford has already fallen into and—like all habits—it was easier to form than it is to dispel.

"Yours," Ford swears, and leans forward to press his forehead against the crown of Stan's skull. "Yours, Stanley, yours, yours—"

"*Mine*."

in a shroud of frost

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *kiss on the nose*.

In this story, there is an implied sexual relationship between teenage Stans.

Winter in Glass Shard Beach has teeth: the wind bites, the air nips, and every icy inhale burns. The sensible inhabitants of this small coastal town know to don the essentials before venturing out into the cold, but unfortunately for Ford, Stan is not a sensible person.

"You're an idiot," Ford says as they approach the entrance to the hidden grotto. It is Christmas break and recent ice storms have confined them—and their extended family—to the house for several days. Between the lack of privacy and the constant barrage of well-meaning but increasingly invasive questions, Ford is immensely relieved to get away for a few hours. "I told you it was cold out."

"Sh-shu-dup, p-p-poindex-t-t-ter," Stan stutters through his chattering teeth. His bare hands are shoved as deeply as possible into his front pockets and his shoulders are hunched up to his bright red ears. He ducks beneath the broken boards awkwardly. "S'n-not that b-bad."

Stan is dressed plainly in a thin brown suede jacket, a blue flannel shirt, a pair of straight leg jeans, and beat-up chucks. He is not wearing a hat, or a scarf, or gloves, and is no way protected against the seasonably frigid weather. The fact that Stan had chosen his outfit despite Ford's warnings about the temperature annoy him; Stan has recently become obsessed with appearing as tough and unaffected as possible, often to the detriment of common sense.

"I believe you," Ford replies with no small amount of sarcasm. "You don't look at all miserable."

Stan glares at him. Ford raises an eyebrow.

"I-if you s-say 'I t-told you so'," Stan swears, "I-I will p-punch you in the d-dick."

Normally, Ford would berate Stan for his foolishness; today, he resists the urge. He does not want to hurt Stan's careful ego and send him into the downward spiral of a bad mood. Ford has other plans for their first afternoon alone in a week—plans that involve the nest of blankets in the cabin of the Stan-o-War and the half-used bottle of lube in his jacket pocket—and none of these imagined scenarios include Stan sulking.

So Ford swallows his irritation, unwinds the knitted scarf from his neck, and turns to knot it around Stan's. When he's finished, he gently tugs Stan forward so he can kiss the tip of Stan's cold nose.

"Come on," Ford murmurs as he envelopes Stan's fingers in his mittened hand. Their feet sink into the sand with a thin crunch and their exhaled breath condenses into quickly dissipating clouds as Ford pulls Stan towards the sheltered beach where they moored their boat for the winter. "Let's get you warmed up."

the tide

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *French kiss* and I just… I don't know how this ended up being almost 2k…?

(。・ω・。)??????

Beware! Middle-aged men make-outs and rampant domesticity lie before ye!

After Stan pulls dinner out of the oven and sets it upon a trivet to cool, he walks out of the kitchen, through the living room, and into the chaos of the ground floor library. One of the large bookcases dominating the near wall hides a secret passageway; Stan opens this sliding bookcase by pulling on the sixth volume of an outdated encyclopedia set, follows the steps down to the elevator, and then takes said elevator down to Ford's personal study on lower level two.

Stan thinks nothing of the distance. He has, after all, traveled this path an innumerable amount of times in the twenty years since the cabin was built.

"Ford?" Stan calls when the elevator grinds to a halt, raps his knuckles thrice against the closed door. When he does not hear his brother's usual welcome, he knocks harder and half-shouts, "Hey poindexter, you in there?"

Again, there is no answer.

Stan does not bother to knock a third time. Ford may have fallen asleep at his desk—he had become a serial cat-napper in college and never grew out of the habit—or he might be too engrossed in his work to register Stan's knocking. Either way, the only solution is to enter Ford's study without Ford's acknowledgment, something that Ford has complained about in the past.

"What if I'm in the middle of a delicate experiment?" Ford would often postulate, sticking out his dimpled chin in the annoying way he did when he believed that what he said was an irrefutable and unarguable truth. "What if your sudden presence derails a complex train of thought? I cannot always retrace my steps, Stan. After all, genius is one percent inspiration—"

"And ninety-nine percent perspiration," Stan would finish with an exaggerated eye roll, because if he's heard it once, he's heard it a thousand times. "Jesus, Ford, pick another Edison quote to overuse, wouldja?"

Hypothetical scenarios notwithstanding, Stan refuses to feel guilty about entering Ford's study without Ford's explicit permission. Ford's ability to look after himself dwindles with every passing year; without Stan there to occasionally interrupt, there is a good chance that Ford would eventually waste away to nothing.

Besides, Stan thinks inanely as he opens the door and steps inside Ford's dimly lit domain. *I made goddamned lasagna—the hell he ain't eatin' it.*

Ford does not look up when Stan enters. He remains hunched over his desk, his shoulders bent at a deep and exhausted angle. All twelve of his fingers are buried in the too-long mass of his hair and the closer Stan gets, the easier it is for him to see the frustration in the furrow of Ford's eyebrows. Ford is so absorbed by the tumultuous spread of paperwork in front of him that he does not look up once, not even when Stan comes to a halt on the opposite side of his desk.

Stan clears his throat.

Ford still does not look up.

"Ford," Stan says.

Again, Ford does not look up.

"Earth to nerd!" Stan all but bellows. "Come in nerd, come in!"

Ford's whole body jerks in surprise. His hands fall from the riotous graying waves of his hair and his back straightens as he sits up. "*Stan!*" Ford hisses, more shocked than angry. "What the hell are you—"

"I knocked," Stan interrupts with a carefully nonchalant shrug. "You didn't answer."

"Damnit, Stan—I *told* you not to—"

"Dinner's gettin' cold," Stan interrupts again, stopping Ford's tired tirade before it can gain momentum. "Do you maybe wanna, I don't know—" Stan sketches a rough gesture to the door and the upstairs as Ford glares at him. "—do this at the kitchen table?"

Ford's gaze snaps in the direction Stan had pointed—towards the half-opened door and the brightly lit elevator cage—and softens, almost guiltily, before flickering back to his work. Ford sighs; runs his palms over his raspy cheeks; and presses his blunt, ink-stained fingertips into the crow's feet developing in the outer corners of his eyes. The action causes Ford's glasses to lift up and expose the purple etch of shadows that were originally hidden by the glare of Ford's lenses.

"What time is it?" Ford asks.

"A little past seven," answers Stan.

Ford inhales deeply and, even if Stan did not have forty-three years worth of experience in regards to Ford's tells, it would still be obvious to him that Ford was stalling. He can clearly

see Ford formulating his flimsy excuse before he begins to say, "Thank you, Stanley, but I need to finish my grant proposal by tomorrow, and—"

Stan leans down and stops the barrage of Ford's words for the third time in as many minutes. This time, however, Stan interrupts his brother with a kiss.

The kiss is a gamble. Ford is—and always has been—as equally likely to push Stan away as he is to pull him closer, and the way Ford freezes beneath the sudden touch offers no indication as to whether Ford will give into the temptation, or deny it. All Stan can do is hope for Ford's surrender as their kiss stretches into a softly suspended possibility, as Ford's mouth remains still beneath the steady pressure of Stan's mouth—

It is a welcome relief when Ford tilts his his head in acquiescence and presses gently back.

"Sixer," Stan murmurs against the welcome plushness of his brother's mouth. His hands move from where they had laid, flat and inert, to cradle his brother's stubbled jaw; his thumbs caress the swell of Ford's cheeks and his fingers curl tenderly into the divots below Ford's ears. In return, Ford wraps his hands around Stan's thick upper arms. "Sixer, I need—"

Ford's mouth parts and Stan licks into the damp heat of his mouth. His tongue slides along the length of Ford's tongue; Ford whines helplessly at the slow, slick touch, and his fingers dig bruises into the heavy muscle of Stan's biceps. It is an unspoken invitation for Stan to do more, to move his hands into Ford's hair and *pull*, to expose Ford's neck to his teeth and his mounting desire.

For a moment, Stan is sorely tempted. He wants to strip the multiple layers of Ford's clothes and lay him bare; he wants to lift the metaphorical weight of Ford's stress and replace it with the grounding, physical weight of his body; and he wants, so very badly, to make Ford forget about the world beyond the warm, intimate cocoon of their entangled limbs.

Stan resists only because he knows that if he gives into his want, if he fucks Ford stupid over his desk, Ford will eventually convince Stan to go upstairs without him.

It won't be done out of maliciousness or purposeful intention. Ford may be pragmatic and firmly subjective in terms of morality, but he is not manipulative; he is straight-forward and blunt, especially with Stan, and when he promises to join Stan later, as they whisper to each other in the golden haze of their afterglow, he will mean every word.

And Stan will believe him, as he always does—

And Ford will be so consumed by his work that he will inevitably lose track of time—

And Stan will end up alone, eating cold lasagna while he stands with one hip against the kitchen counter.

"I know how this ends, Sixer," Stan says as he musters his stubborn willpower and pulls away from Ford and his warm, tender mouth. When the anchor of Stan's palms on Ford's jaw prevent him from following, Ford's eyes flutter open halfway. The long, dark length of his eyelashes cannot shadow the vibrant blue of his irises.

"Lee?" Ford slurs, still dazed from their simple but sensuous kiss. "What're you…?"

"Dinner's ready," Stan asserts as much to Ford as to himself. He came downstairs to pull Ford away from his work; he will not let Ford's pliant, kiss-swollen lips distract him from his original plan no matter how sweet that distraction may be. "I made lasagna."

"Lasagna?" Ford parrots even as clarity begins to clear the cloud of arousal from his eyes. "You… made lasagna?"

"Yep," Stan says, popping the p. "Your favorite."

"I really am busy," Ford tells him, the words edging into a whine. "And I… I need to finish this."

"I know," Stan answers because he does know, he absolutely *does*. He is not ignorant of the fact that, on top of his normal work, Ford's annual review for his postgraduate research is fast approaching, and that Ford worries—as he worries every year—that his findings will fall short of the board's expectations and that his funding will be cut. It is this anxiety that pushes Ford to work harder and longer, and harder and longer, a trait that Stan has always admired and hated in equal measure. "And I get it."

Ford blinks at him.

"Stanford," Stan emphasizes, "I would have to be blind, deaf, *and* dumb to not see how much your work means to you. But," Stan pauses to press the pads of his rough thumbs to the worrisome bags beneath Ford's eyes, "I also know that you haven't eaten since I made breakfast, and that you spent last night in your lab instead of coming to bed. You've worked enough. Now, you need to eat and you need to sleep, and I won't stop buggin' you until you do."

Stan's hands fall from Ford's face before he straightens, takes a step back from the desk, and crosses his arms over his chest. All his cards are on the table. If Ford does not fold, there is nothing more Stan can do short of slinging his brother over his shoulder and physically removing him from the room. He's done it in the past when Ford was being particularly obstinate; he is unafraid to do it again, if Ford chooses not to concede defeat.

Maybe Ford sees the strength of Stan's resolve and knows he cannot win against such conviction. Maybe he understands Stan's argument and has reached the logical conclusion that Stan only speaks truth. Or maybe he can finally feel the gnaw of hunger in his belly, or the exhaustion that pulls at his limbs, and knows he cannot continue for much longer.

Not that it matters. The reason as to why Ford ultimately softens in surrender does not means much to Stan—it only matters that he does.

"You're very stubborn," Ford says, his voice tinged with fond exasperation. The corners of his mouth quirk upward into a familiar, crooked grin. "Did you know that?"

The relief Stan feels as Ford stands is overwhelming. He did not realize how tense he has been since he entered Ford's study and it bleeds from him while Ford fixes his askew glasses

and the rumpled fall of his heavy sweater. It is all he can do to scoff in fake derision and ask, "And why do you think that is?"

Ford casts one final look at his papers—hesitates for one final time—before he rounds his desk and fits one of his broad hands into the small of Stan's back to guide him slowly towards the elevator. The heat of his palm seeps through the fabric of Stan's old henley like an unspoken, but not unheard, compromise.

"I have a few hypotheses," Ford quips.

And as Stan closes the door of Ford's study behind them—as they begin their short ascent to the ground floor—Stan looks at his brother, leans into his side, and says, "All I need is one."

to start and to end

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *'I'm sorry' kiss* and was inspired by the events of DaMvtF. Mostly, I just need Ford to not be a giant bag of dicks. I also need for Ford to apologize to Stan for *being* a giant bag of dicks. THIS IS WISH FULFILLMENT AT ITS FINEST FOLKS.

the shotgun is overheated and useless in stan's cramping hands when ford jumps down in front of him, grabs hold of the nightmare, and electrocutes it with his gloves. the shadowy tendrils spasm around stan's forearm before going limp. ford pulls it from stan's body and tosses it to the desiccated grass of the unmowed lawn, where it dissolves into the earth as though it had never existed. ford then pushes stan back towards the safety of the porch where the nightmares cannot go, shoving him so hard he loses his balance and falls to his uninjured knee.

"stanley," ford says, his voice unwavering, as the creatures beat against the iridescent barrier behind him. "stanley, are you—"

the dirty folds of ford's trench part. whatever ford wanted to say is lost to the static that builds in stan's ears as his buzzing brain registers that dipper is tucked against ford's side, limp and unresponsive.

"what the fuck—" stan shouts as he rises from his crouch. his leg burns like fire—one of the other nightmares had sunk its razored teeth into his thigh before he could shoot it—and he is certain that his left eye is unsalvageable, but the sight of his grand nephew's unresponsive body fills him with a burst of secondary adrenaline. "stanford, i swear to god, if he—"

"he's fine," ford interjects as stan grabs dipper from ford and takes the boy into his arms. there's a thin scratch on dipper's cheek and a fine sheen of sweat glistening on his forehead. his tangled hair is pushed away from his birthmark; the familiar lines and dots are inflamed as though infected with a terrible sickness.

"what the hell happened?" stan snaps viciously even as he cradles dipper's skull gently in one broad palm. dipper's eyes are moving frantically beneath the thin cover of his eyelids and he whimpers softly, woundedly, on every exhale. "that does not—he does not sound fuckin' *fine*!"

"he went into the dream realm," ford says. "he—he went to find mabel."

stan's heart twists as he thinks of his great niece. when the sky had broken open and the nightmares oozed like thick tar down onto the forest, stan did not have time to do more than

accept the weapon ford shoved into his hands and shoot. the glowing blue rounds had stopped the nightmares as they creeped towards the shack, but there were too many of them, and stan had not been able to advance further than the back porch before he had been overwhelmed.

"where is she?" stan asks.

"at the epicenter," ford replies. "her physical body, at least. i fear that bill sealed her mind inside itself when he crossed into our realm. she would have been lost forever if dipper had not—if he had not gone after her."

dipper whines pathetically, his eyebrows drawn together as though in pain. stan immediately tucks the boy against his chest; he has always been small for his age—as all pines men are before they hit puberty—but stan has never thought of dipper as something breakable before that moment.

"he's fine," ford repeats, in the same clinical tone he used that morning when he said that he and dipper would be gone all day; the same tone he used when he told stan how to unlock the specialized shotgun's safety; the same detached, unaffected, and apathetic tone that ford has used since he walked back through the portal. "he's—he will be fine."

the iron taste of blood in the back of stan's throat tastes like rage and desperation. he is ready to spit it out—to yell his frustration until the sky breaks open again—and he lifts his stare from his great nephew to his brother, ready to unleash his helpless fury—

ford's eyes are wet. drops clump together on his eyelashes and threaten to fall to the parched and greedy earth. the unexpectedness of such a vulnerable expression chokes stan's anger; stan has not seen his brother cry since they were the same age as dipper and mabel.

"i thought he was like me," ford says. his gaze rests on dipper's twisted face. "i thought he was intelligent—misunderstood—full of potential. i thought—i thought that if i guided him, i could keep him from making the same mistakes that i made. i could teach him. i could mold him. i could make him the genius i wish i could have been if i had not fallen suspect to bill's manipulation. he would stay here, become my apprentice, and one day, take up my mantle." ford scoffs, a simple noise of disgust, and closes his eyes and shakes his head. "what a fool."

stan blinks at ford's admission. he knows that ford and dipper had grown close in the weeks since ford's return—a closeness that stan had been both incredibly wary and stupidly envious of—but he had believed that ford's interest had been born of indulgence.

"the fuck, ford," stan says, stunned by his brother's idiocy. "he's *twelve*."

"it was wishful thinking—arrogance," ford softly states as he opens his eyes to meet stan's incredulous stare. "i can admit that. it is true we are similar—but we are not the same. dipper understands what is most important when i did not. he knows that i never knew and for that, i __"

ford's empty hands tighten into fists, the fabric of his gloves tightening over his knuckles. it is as rare for ford to struggle for words as it is for him to apologize, and stan refuses to break

the tense silence that builds between them. if he does, ford may never voice what he wants to say—what he needs to say—what stan has to hear.

"i regret what i could not see you," ford murmurs, the soft words carrying past the muffled screeches of the nightmares that writhe beyond the barrier around the shack. "i was so caught up with moving forward that i forgot that you are always behind me. i was blind to you. i took you for granted and it cost us. now it has cost dipper, and mabel, and the entire multiverse, and—"

stan closes the scant distance between them and kisses ford as he has not since they were young and inseparable. it is simple and close-mouthed and lasts for the briefest slice of eternity, but it conveys everything stan wants ford to know. when ford softens beneath stan's forgiveness—when he accepts stan's reassurances—stan finds that it is easy to pull away.

"we both made dumb mistakes," stan says, meeting his brother's blue, blue eyes. "and now we're old men, and we don't got a lotta time left. but these kids—if these kids trust each other enough to stop a demon from rippin' the world in half—then we gotta make damn sure nothing gets in their way."

ford's eyes flicker to the back door. "there may be something in the basement but—"

"then go get it," says stan, resolute. "whatever if it is—if it can help, go get it."

"stanley—" ford attempts.

"sixer," stan interrupts, firmly but not unkindly. "it's okay. we—we made our decisions. they may not have been the best decisions but—this ain't about us. not anymore."

stan does not know if it the resolve in his voice or the creeping awareness of finality surrounding their conversation that prompts ford to initiate their second kiss. all stan knows is that it is as uplifting, as bittersweet, as mutually penitent as their first, and there is enough honesty in the gesture to make stan's heart overflow. again, the kiss lasts for a moment—a meager drop of time in the deep well of their lives together and their lives apart—but it is no more and no less than what they need.

"you're right, of course," ford says when they splinter apart, forever two reluctant halves of an imperfect whole. "it's not about us."

"no," stan agrees. "it's about them."

stan and ford look down at the boy between them. dipper's face is turned against the torn fabric of stan's blazer; he has instinctively curled into the physical comfort of stan's embrace even though it cannot ease any of his mental agony. his obvious pain hurts stan more acutely than stan would have thought himself capable of before the summer began, before mabel and dipper showed up at the shack and eased their way into his old and tired heart. stan knows ford feels the same when he tenderly curls his huge, gloved hand over dipper's thin, bony shoulder.

"for the children," ford says.

"for the children," says stan.

a thousand voices howling

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *sad kiss* and is set vaguely before the events of DaMvtF.

The digital clock on Stan's bedside table reads 3:14 a.m. when the door to the bedroom creaks open. Stan does not need to look up to know who it is; even if he had more than one night visitor, the whispering footsteps and hesitation in the doorway tell him more than his old eyes ever could.

"Ford," Stan greets softly as his brother closes the door behind him.

"Stanley," Ford returns, matching Stan's tone. Ford takes care to turn the door handle so the latch doesn't click before he slides the lock into place. That lock has been used more in the past thirty days than it has been in the last thirty years. Stan never had reason to lock his door, before, and the discretion Ford uses is no more than a weak, damning attempt at normalcy. "Did I wake you?"

"No," Stan says. He had gone to bed hours ago, just after the children, but old age and habit prevented him from sleeping. It was not so long ago that he would have poured himself a cup of coffee at midnight and secreted down to the lab. There, Stan would have flipped through yet another book on theoretical physics until exhaustion pulled at his eyelids and he nodded off at the desk. Sometimes Stan had enough energy to collapse onto the cot he had set up in the corner, piling blankets atop him to stave off the cold from the cavern where the portal stood.

But the lab is Ford's again. So too is the cot.

"Good, good," Ford murmurs as he pulls off the tattered length of his trench from his body and deposits it atop the dresser. He then bends down to undo the laces of his boots. Stan can hear Ford's joints crack, a subtle pop that he would not have heard without his hearing aid.

Christ, Stan thinks as he stares at his brother, down on one knee, head bowed. The darkness cannot hide the silver at Ford's temples, nor the weariness in the bend of his spine. *When did we get so damn old?*

Ford straightens and steps out of his boots, sliding them next to the dresser he set his trench upon. He pulls off his socks; he unbuckles his belt and removes his broadcloth pants; he shucks his sweater and the long-sleeve shirt beneath. Every article of clothing is meticulously folded and placed out of the way. Stan remembers the quirk from childhood, remembers how he used to tease Ford about it.

Now, Stan says nothing.

"May I?" Ford asks when he is clad in nothing more than a borrowed pair of boxers.

"You're always asking," Stan responds. "Don't you ever get tired of asking the same question?"

It is impossible to make out the details of Ford's face in the dim, red-tinted light, and Stan itches with the desire to reach over to his bedside table and turn on the small lamp. He resists only because he remembers the clench of Ford's fingers around his wrists the last time he tried: bruising and insistent.

"Insanity," Ford quotes as he steps forward, "is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results."

And as he has done every night since his return, Ford pulls the sheets off Stan's body, straddles his hips, and covers Stan's mouth with his own.

if it's a game (then we'll cheat)

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *seductive kiss*.

The Stans are teenagers in this story.

Stan does not know what wakes him from his lazy afternoon nap. Perhaps it is the sharp and sudden cry of a nearby gull; or perhaps it is the distant shrill of children further down the beach; or his body's unconscious acknowledgement of the day's waning heat; or the weight of Ford's stare; or perhaps it is a combination of some of these things or none of these things or all of these things—Stan cannot be sure. All he knows is that when he comes to wakefulness, Ford is leaning idle against the mast of the Stan-o-War, his arms crossed over his chest and his blue eyes half-lidded.

"Hey," Stan croaks when he is mostly cognizant, his rough voice thickened and slurred by sleep. "How long was I out?"

"A few hours," Ford responds. His voice sounds as disused as Stan's, but whereas Stan's is as gravelly as sand, Ford's voice is as soft as a wave that rolls onto the beach and breaks into foam. "Three or four."

Stan blinks up at the cumulus studded sky. The twilight is near, and the familiar azure is washed with peach and lavender and pastel pink. It is a stark contrast to the vibrant crimson of the sun as it approaches the western horizon.

"Ugh," Stan groans, grinding the heels of his palms against his eyes. "We missed dinner."

Ford hums in wordless yet unconcerned acknowledgement. Stan glances at him; his gaze is unfocused—distracted—familiar. Stan's insides twist.

"I got a few bucks," Stan continues as he sits up, as he carefully pretends not to notice. His shoulder and hip are sore from lying on the wooden deck. The thin falsa blanket he spread across the old planks had done little to protect his unpadded joints. "We can go to the boardwalk and get some chili fries."

Ford makes another non-committal noise that vibrates in the deep well of his throat.

"Or we could go to the diner and get a couple hamburgers." Stan laces his fingers together, tilts his chin upwards, and pushes his palms towards the sky; every vertebrae in his spine pops. His thin cotton shirt rides up over the outward curve of his belly. "Split a chocolate shake."

"Yeah," Ford murmurs absently. "Yeah, we could that."

Stan peers at his brother through the covert shadow of his lashes and, sure enough, Ford's stare has dropped to the swell of Stan's exposed stomach. It should make Stan uncomfortable, but it does not; instead, something warm and ineffable uncurls in the unthinking pit of his gut.

"Yea—ah," Stan moans, exaggerating the relief of his stretch. His shirt slips further upwards. "Fu—uck—let's—"

Stan waits for Ford to blush, to bite his bottom lip, to turn away. They have been playing this escalating game for months—maybe even for *years*—and this has always been the breaking point for Ford, when Stan's already unsubtle baiting edges into blatancy. As long as Ford ignores Stan, Stan can pretend that he is not using his body to tease Ford to aroused embarrassment—that the heat pooling in his solar plexus is no more than brotherly affection—and that he does not look at Ford in the same starving way Ford looks at him.

This time, however, Ford does not ignore him. Instead, his eyes snap upwards and meet Stan's own. Stan freezes like startled prey caught between the urgent pull of flight and the push of fight-ready adrenaline. There is no possible way for Stan to deny the heat blazing in Ford's eyes, nor the swollen darkness of Ford's pupils.

"Yeah," Ford says. "We could do that, too."

Ford pushes off from the mast with the unflinching grace and confidence of a predator, and takes one—two—three steps towards Stan. His hands find Stan's shoulders and press Stan back down onto the deck. Stan is too surprised—too overwhelmed—to do more than follow Ford's firm guidance, his head spinning despite the slow and tender way Ford stretches him supine.

"Ford," Stan gasps as his brother looms over him. Ford's tanned, naked forearms bracket Stan's skull and his bony, khaki-covered knees bracket Stan's hips. Ford's face is so close Stan can clearly see the summer-coaxed bloom of freckles across the bridge of his nose and along the crest of his cheeks. "*Ford*—"

"Just once," Ford interrupts. The words are a quiet plea, at odds with the unyielding cage of his body. "Just this once, Stanley—just let me—"

Stan's entire body throbs when Ford's mouth covers his own. He can feel the ache of desire down to his bones and he moans helplessly as it rises in his blood like high tide. Ford whines—clutches at the short strands of Stan's swept back hair—and licks into Stan's mouth.

It is not Stan's first kiss nor, he knows, is it Ford's. They traded those kisses away at a neighborhood block party to a pair of giggling girls that lived down the street, years ago when Stan still believed in cooties. Then, as Stan grew into adolescence and his interest in kissing grew, the opportunities to kiss had lessened. At seventeen, he has only exchanged a handful of singular kisses, and all of them had been chaste, brief, and disappointingly lackluster.

This kiss is none of those things.

Stan clings to Ford as Ford claims him, his fingers bunching the fabric of Ford's shirt over his waist. He cannot think past the slide of Ford's tongue against his own, slick and hot; every movement sends a jolt of pleasure down the length of his spine. The sensations gather in the greedy maw of his stomach and build—and build—and build—until Stan is dizzy from the pressure.

Stan does not know how long they kiss. One minute—two minutes—five, seven, or ten—it does not matter—it is not enough. He keens with loss when Ford breaks away to draw desperately needed breath; they pant heavily, raggedly, as they stare at each other, wide-eyed and searching. Stan can feel the rise and fall of Ford's rib cage beneath his fists.

"Stan," Ford mumbles, his cheeks flushed and his swollen mouth damp with spit. Stan can hear the hesitation in his voice and knows—with a clarity born of familiarity—that Ford's previous courage is being overrun by the unrelenting crowd of his thoughts. "Stan, I—"

Panic flares, sharp and cold, beneath Stan's breastbone.

"Don't," Stan interrupts. He tries to sound threatening—resolute—but his voice breaks with emotion. "Don't you dare, Sixer, don't you fuckin' dare think that—that you're pushin' this on me—that you're the only—the only one who fuckin' *feels* this way—that it's some kinda—imposition or chore or that, fuck, I'm doin' this outta obligation. I—I *want* this—*wanted* it for so damn long, you don't *dare* think I don't—"

Ford's eyes drop to Stan's trembling mouth. A shade of doubt clings to the soft corners of his eyes. It is not enough to stop Ford from leaning incrementally forward, but it is enough to prevent him from taking what Stan offers.

"Sixer," Stan begs shamelessly. He strains closer to his brother. "Don't let your big brain get in the way. I want this—I want *you*."

There is a small mockery of distance between their lips. Stan wants to close it; he wants to tilt his chin upwards and kiss Ford with all the passion and longing he's repressed. Yet while Stan wants this more than anything, he knows he cannot. If Ford does not make the final move—if Ford does not come to the conclusion himself—he will inevitably overthink the obvious.

"I can't," Ford murmurs even as he sways dangerously near. "If I let myself—I'll never—I won't stop, Stan. I won't be able to."

"I don't want you to," Stan tells Ford in the same honest whisper. He feels raw and exposed, yet oddly unembarrassed beneath Ford's scrutinization. "You got me, whether you like it or not."

"Yeah," Ford says. "I have you."

And then Ford kisses Stan for the second time—

And then for a third—

And then—long after the sun has set, and Ford kisses him in the safe and quiet shroud of night—Stan finds that he has finally lost count.

the places we once kept warm

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *mid-sex kiss*. This is a vague continuation of *a thousand voices howling* but can be read as a stand alone.

Contains non-explicit grunkle sex. ʅ(`▽▽▽´ʅ)

"Be quiet," Ford demands as his mouth scrapes down the column of Stan's throat. The careless stubble on his chin scratches against Stan's skin and makes Stan shiver. "The children—"

"Make me," Stan replies.

Stan gasps as Ford sinks his teeth into the meaty juncture of his neck and his shoulder. The bite is hard and nearly breaks the skin; it would hurt too much if Ford didn't gentle a half-second later, and soothe the sting with his tongue. The dichotomy of these sensations make Stan feel light-headed even as his body sinks into the sagging mattress. Breathless, meaningless laughter escapes Stan as the endorphins pulse into his veins.

"What was that about insanity?" Stan asks, running his palms down Ford's muscular, scar-riddled back. "Doing the same thing again and again?"

Ford bites him again for his teasing. Caught off guard and overloaded by the sudden and unexpected hurt, Stan's nails dig into Ford's marred flesh, and he moans loudly.

"Quiet," Ford hisses when he pulls away. His eyes are dark and heavy, the familiar blue blackened by the hour, and his eyebrows are furrowed deeply. The censure in his face is not unlike the frustration he expresses when he does not fully understand an equation or an idea. "You need to be—"

Stan rolls his hips upwards. Ford moans.

"*Quiet,*" Stan mocks.

Ford tilts his chin up to glare at Stan. He is no longer a soft-hearted boy with too much optimism and too little sense, but Stan cannot be intimidated by him when his hair is a tousled mess, when his glasses are askew. There is nothing in this universe—or any universe beyond—that could change Ford enough for Stanley to not know the core of him.

"Don't be a smart ass," Ford snaps. "It isn't worth the risk."

The line of Ford's mouth is as hard and solid as stone, and Stan cannot help but fit the pad of his thumb against the corner of such an unforgiving expression. Ford's skin has lost the elasticity of youth and is unbearably soft; Stan frowns and slides his thumb away and over the crest of Ford's cheekbone, where the prick of his stubble ceases its ascent. Years upon years ago, Ford would have yielded to the pressure Stan exerts; now, his brother is unchangeable, despite being weathered and worn by time.

"And what risk is that?" Stan goads as his hand falls away. "You've already locked the door."

(love)sick

Chapter Notes

Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *kiss on the neck*. I dug out my old o-chem notebook from high school to write this fic. My teacher always told us that it was a good idea to keep detailed notes; I am grateful for his advice, even though I am quite sure that this is not what he had in mind. THIS IS FOR YOU MR. SMITH. (￣^￣)

"Does your neck hurt?" Ford's lab partner whispers halfway through their experiment. It's a simple distillation lab and—as with most organic chemistry procedures—it is ten percent frenzied activity and ninety percent patience.

"Huh?" Ford asks intelligently as he looks up from his composition notebook. He had been attempting to work ahead on his problem sets while he waited, but he cannot focus on the equations long enough for them to make sense.

"Your neck," the other student reiterates as she pushes her large glasses up the bridge of her nose. "You keep rubbing it and sighing. Do you need to go to the nurse's office?"

For a moment, Ford is blissfully confused by his lab partner's observation. His neck is fine; sometimes he strains the muscles at the base of his skull from being perpetually hunched over a desk but the familiar aching pull is absent. He begins to ask, "What are you talking about?" before he registers the pressure of his fingertips against the side of his throat and chokes on the syllables.

Oh, Ford thinks as he stills. His flight or fight response kicks in and releases a flood of adrenaline into his bloodstream. *How long have I been…?*

"It's just a tension headache," Ford lies as he carefully removes his fingers from neck. His voice sounds breathless and unstable and it echoes in his own ears. "I'm fine."

His lab partner raises an eyebrow. It is a skeptic and suspicious gesture. Then she shrugs, accepts the falsehood, and returns to her own work. She is several problem sets ahead of him, which is not surprising considering Ford's wandering mind.

Focus, Ford berates himself. He stares down at the question he's worked on for the past several minutes and, for the hundredth time, re-reads, *20. Write structural formulas for the following compounds: a) 1,3,5-tricholrobenzene, b) p-chlorotoluene, c) isopropylbenzene…*

Yet the harder Ford tries to focus on the problem in front of him, the harder it becomes for him to ignore the small patch of skin on the left side of his neck. It feels hot and sensitive—raw, almost, and dangerously exposed—and Ford's fingers unconsciously brush against that

spot on his throat, in the hollow beneath his jaw where the skin is thin over his carotid. He can feel his pulse. It beats as hard and fast as a jackhammer, as hard and as fast as it had several nights ago when Stan had been laid flat in an amateur boxing tournament and—

When Ford had looped Stan's burly arm over his shoulder to prevent Stan from collapsing and—

When Stan swayed into Ford's space with an enormous, punch-drunk grin and—

When Stan pressed his lips to Ford's throat and—

"Are you sure you don't need to go to the nurse's office?" His lab partner asks again, concern lacing her words. Her eyes skitter across Ford's warm cheeks. "You're flushed."

This time, there is nothing subtle about the way Ford's hand jerks away from his neck. It is a sudden and ungainly movement that surprises them both. His arm snaps out and his knuckles hit the receiving flask. For one heart-stopping second, the entire delicate glass apparatus used in the experiment wobbles.

"Seriously, Stanford," Ford's lab partner gripes sharply when the apparatus thankfully settles. Irritation has replaced her empathetic tone at the almost disaster. "You're no help like this. Go to the nurse. I can finish the lab on my own and give you the results later."

Ford feels his embarrassment multiply exponentially with every word. The heat on his face and on the tips of his ears is overwhelming. His lab partner is right when she says he's no help; Ford has been unable to think past the slide of Stan's warm, damp mouth against his throat since the tournament Saturday night.

"Yeah," Ford murmurs, unable to meet her eyes for fear she'll see the truth. "Yeah, I'll—I'll go. I'm just—I'm sorry I'm so distracted."

"You're not yourself," she replies. The words are too brittle to be sincere but they are not unforgiving. "You're sick, Stanford. It happens"

And maybe Ford is sick. Maybe he has a fever—not in the way his lab partner thinks he has—or in the way the nurse will suspect when he goes to the school clinic and asks to lie down—but in a way that is deep and consuming and strange. Maybe the symptoms are acute, and they will fade as quickly as they presented—or maybe—maybe Ford's fever is an incurable virus. Maybe he will never get over the sickness Stan passed onto him and, maybe—*maybe*—

Ford's fingers find the spot on his throat where Stan kissed him and he thinks softly, achingly, *Maybe Stan is sick, too.*

a rising wave

Chapter Notes

> Written for this prompt list. The prompt was *awkward teenage crush kiss*. And while Ford is awkward and the Stans are teenagers, I feel like at this point I'm just writing kisses and slapping them under prompts that are most applicable. ¯_(ツ)_/¯

They are thirteen going on fourteen, spending another afternoon on their rough disaster of a boat, when Ford turns to Stan and asks, "Do you think anyone would ever want to kiss me?"

Stan is startled by the abrupt question and chokes on a mouthful of too warm soda. The summer sun has baked most of the carbonation from the aluminum can, leaving it flat and borderline unpalatable, yet it still manages to sting the back of Stan's throat when he swallows wrong. The rough, instinctual coughing fit that ensues does little to alleviate the scratch in his esophagus.

"Goddamn!" Stan wheezes. "Warn a guy, wouldja?"

"Sorry," Ford apologizes, contrite. "I just—I was just—"

Ford's front teeth dig harshly into the chapped swell of his bottom lip and he casts his timid gaze downwards, his chin tucked against chest. Stan cannot help but soften at the sight. Ford has always been susceptible to anxiety and, while Stan cannot physically fight the emotion away like he can bullies, he can combat it in different ways.

"People get kissed all the time," Stan reassures Ford, leaning forward to knock a gentle fist against Ford's sternum. "Even giant nerds like you."

Ford's gaze does not move from his knobby, jean-covered knees and his hands twist unconsciously in his lap. "I guess," he murmurs. "But—what if—what if I'm so bad at it that they never want to kiss me again?"

"Nobody's *that* bad at kissing, poindexter."

"But what if I am?"

"Then I guess you'll just have to practice."

"But how?" Ford asks, his voice edging into a whine. "How are you supposed to practice kissing if no one will kiss you? Do you have to find someone with an equal lack of skill and learn together, or do you find someone with lots of skill that is willing to teach you? This is supposing that either wants to kiss you again, given how bad you are—"

Stan knows that his brother is working himself into a panic. He's seen it multiple times in the past—sometimes over more serious issues, sometimes over sillier ones—and he recognizes the signs. Stan also knows that Ford will not drop the subject until he exhausts himself or until Stan interrupts—and interrupt Stan does.

The kiss is chaste; close-mouthed and open-eyed; and it lasts for the space of a heartbeat, or two, or three. It is tentative, in the way most first kisses are, yet full of curiosity and potential. Warmth blooms in Stan's chest at the simple contact, a suffusing and lingering feeling that is not unlike the honeyed heat of the sun beating down on his shoulders. He is surprised by the sudden enormity of feeling; like Ford, Stan has never been kissed, and though he had expectations—ideas—hopes—he had not expected this.

"See?" Stan says when he pulls away, feigning nonchalance. "Nothin' to it."

Ford looks as dizzy as Stan feels, his eyelids fluttering against the freckled swell of his cheeks. "Oh," he breathes. "That was…"

"Easy?" Stan asks.

"*Good,*" Ford corrects, his voice throaty and raw. His tongue darts out and wets his bottom lip, leaving it shiny and slick. It is a nervous gesture Stan has seen countless times in the past, but he has never been more aware of it than he is now. "Is it always so—?"

Stan knows it's wrong. Ford is his brother—his twin—his other half. He should laugh their kiss off as a joke and deny the less-than-platonic stir of heat in his gut, but Stan has always had poor impulse control. He *wants* to kiss Ford again; he wants to chase this feeling. He knows, vaguely, that such a course could end in disaster, but Ford's eyes are as blue and as vast as the ocean stretched across the horizon, and just as full of possibility.

"Well," Stan says with a quick grin and a carefully careless shrug. "Only one way to find out."

This time, Ford meets Stan halfway.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!